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SUBJECT: PRT NINEWA: LOCAL FARMERS LAUNCH MULTISECTARIAN,  
MULTIETHNIC AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

REF: BAGHDAD 2860

Classified By: Ninewa PRT Leader Jason Hyland: for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. This is a Ninewa Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

¶2. (C) In a region of eastern Ninewa, northern Iraq, more often known for confrontation and competition over scarce land resources, six Al Hamdaniya District farmers - with strong PRT Ninewa support (see reftel) - established October 24 the province's first multisectarian, multiethnic agricultural association. Representing hundreds of farmers from the Shia Shabak, Assyrian Catholic and Assyrian Orthodox communities, the six founding members of the organization's board of directors pledged to support shared responses to common agricultural problems like high, unsubsidized prices on farm inputs like seeds, pesticides, fuel and fertilizer.

¶3. (C) Amid the input price shocks and new international market competition since 2003, the farmers also face a lack of credit. By matching their pooled resources with PRT support for revenue-generating activities, such as USG-supported tractor rental, the association plans to generate enough income to support input purchases for its members. Further, the PRT is examining ways to connect the local Director General of Agriculture's and University of Mosul's extension services to the association's structure to boost both local capacity and local interest in the organization. Both institutions have been supportive of the associations from their conception earlier this year.

¶4. (C) PRT Ninewa plans to follow the launch of the Al Hamdaniya organization with a November launch of a second organization in Tal Keif District. Following successful establishment of both organizations, which are operating under different management structures, the PRT plans to support the establishment of similar organizations throughout the province, under the leadership of farmers and entrepreneurs who are similarly interested in shared problems that overcome competing ethnic and sectarian land claims. The PRT, which worked hard to get buy-in from local farmers and offered concrete support, is taking a low-profile approach to this initiative in order to protect the security of the Iraqis who have taken this bold step.  
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